



Testimony in Support of H.B. 5033, An Act Addressing the Needs of Food-Insecure Students at Public Institutions of Higher Education

Dear Chairs Elliott and Slap, Vice Chairs Turco and Flexer, Ranking Members Haines and Witkos, and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

My name is Dylan Council and I am a resident of New Haven. I'm writing to communicate my strong support for H.B. 5033, an Act addressing the needs of food-insecure students at public institutions of higher education. This bill would require public institutions of higher education to assess and address food insecurity among students and to increase access to the supplemental nutrition assistance program for eligible students at institutions of higher education.

Black and low-income students are disproportionately impacted by food insecurity. A study done by the University of Connecticut estimated that around 35% of Connecticut college students suffer from food insecurities. Amongst these alarming statistics, black students constitute fifty-eight percent, which is 19% higher than the overall rate for students identifying as White or Caucasian. Students experiencing food insecurity have a lower average GPA, and higher rates of depression and nutrition deficiencies.

Growing up in a low income community I have been face-to-face with the realities of food insecurity for most of my life. I have seen those close to me struggle to find their next meal, push off their meals whenever possible to save money, and treat hunger as a simple fact of life. Unfortunately, for students who find themselves in these situations in institutions of higher education, it is incredibly difficult to maintain the level of health necessary to succeed. As a result, one in four students have had to take out loans to cover food costs, and one-third of students know someone who has dropped out because they could not afford to eat, according to a recent study by Swipe Out Hunger and Chegg.

Connecticut continues to lag behind in addressing this issue. At least six states have implemented legislation similar to H.B. 5033, and ten have introduced, proposed, or are debating similar bills. There is no reason why Connecticut should lag behind other states in solving this issue. Consistently, Connecticut has found itself at the forefront of progress, and this should be no exception.

In conclusion, I urge you to address the needs of food-insecure students at public institutions of higher education. The consequences of food insecurity impact their ability to perform well in and out of school and have a life-long impact on their development and livelihood. I urge you to favorably vote this bill out of the Higher Education Committee so that these individuals have a chance at fulfilling their best potential.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Dylan Council
New Haven, CT